



Bob-sledding A HAIR-RAISING SPORT AMONG TOURISTS

In one of the most desolate and out-of-the-way nooks of the Alpine mountains adventurous American men and pretty American women have made popular one of the most hazardous sports of the twentieth century.

"Bob-sledding" in the mountains of Davos-Platz is now heralded as the most sensational sport in the world. Compared to its excitement and its spice of danger Alpine climbing, which cost many lives during the last year, now takes second place.

Down the sides of the snow-clad mountains towering over the town of Davos-Platz, old-fashioned American bobbers rush with the speed of express trains. Eighty miles an hour down the Alps is not too fast to suit the votaries of this dangerous sport. Life and limb are risked with a recklessness that at first staggered European tourists and the peasants. But now were Davos-Platz to receive a new grant of arms it would certainly be proper to give an American bobber a prominent place in its insignia.

English lords and society women of high rank have adopted it. German beauties from Berlin and Leipzig vie with their American sisters in thrilling races down the mountains. Frenchmen and Russians climb the mountains side by side with Austrians and Hollanders. From early morning, before the sun has climbed the Swiss Alps, until late in the evening, when the lights of Davos-Platz twinkle in the snow, a medley of nations disport themselves in good-natured rivalry on the difficult heights which, in days gone by, armies strove in vain to scale.

A Wild and Desolate Place.

Davos-Platz is one of the queerest places in the world. It is tucked away high up among the snowy wildernesses of the Alps, in a narrow, trough-like valley, miles away from the trails of the average tourist. It is a small and ancient town, once the ruler of 19 cities, and in the Mecca to which thousands of people whose lungs are affected make an annual pilgrimage for cure.

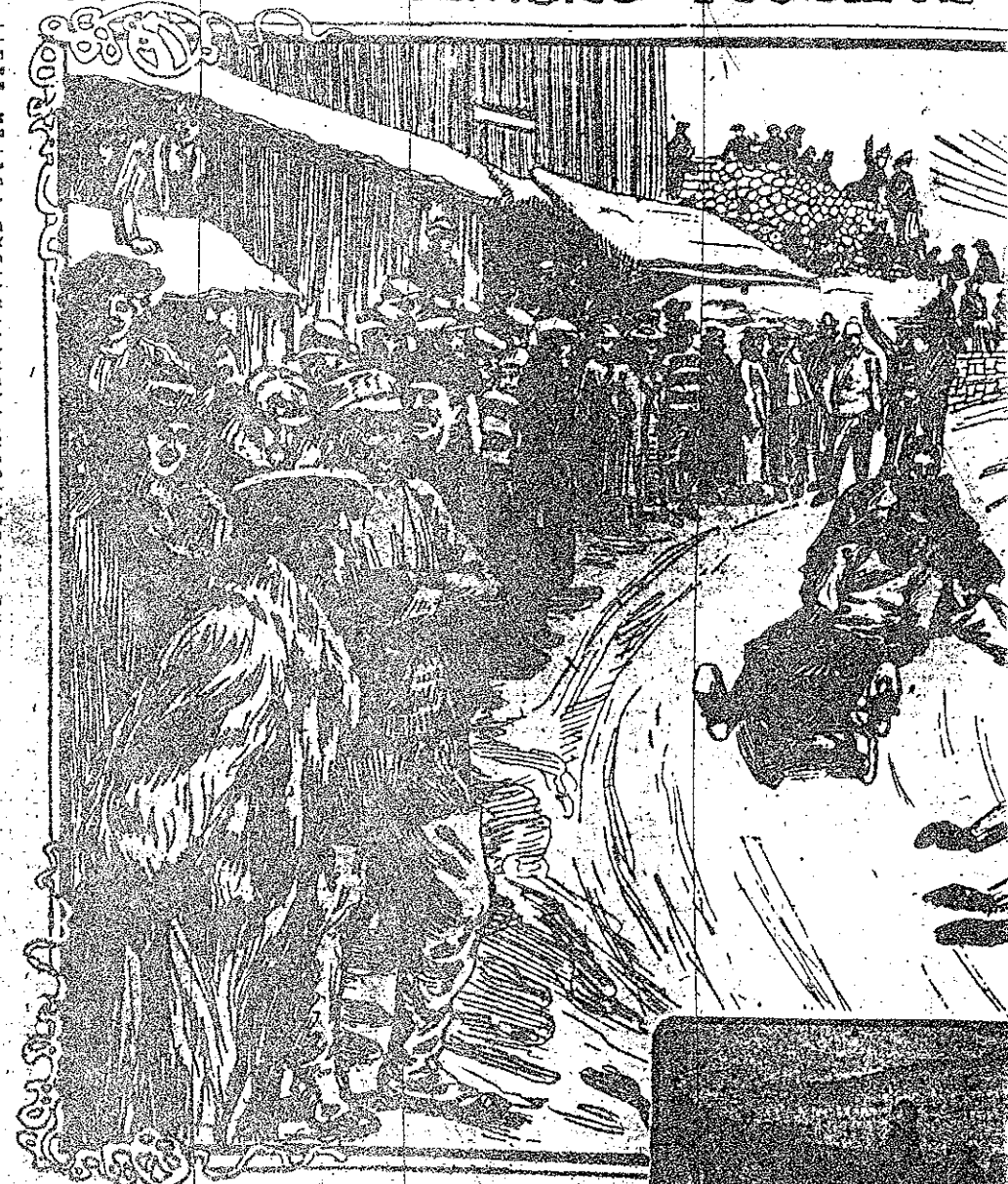
The road to Davos-Platz is a plunge into a region almost as desolate and as wild as the Arctic. As the traveler approaches the town gloomy mountains environ him. Mile after mile slips behind without a sign of life. Then he enters the valley in the center of which is Davos-Platz. In the distance the sun gleams on the roof-topped houses and steeples of the church. If he has read its history he goes back on the day centuries ago when it was a power and headed a powerful confederacy.

Coming of the Americans.

But these things have changed at Davos-Platz. It is now a health resort, and a resort of the fashionables, who discovered its qualities nobody knows, but after Germans, Russians and Englishmen had known it for a long time Americans began straggling there.

From time immemorial it had been the sport of the peasants to slide down the hills on their clumsy sleds. Every year visitors and peasants joined them, but with the Americans came an innovation. Each day found the fashionable tourists going a little higher up the mountains to begin the downward slide. American tailors' aides procured from across the Atlantic the old-fashioned bobbeds of their homeland. American women remembered the days when as school girls they played their own sleds down steep hills.

More and more daring became their slides. The higher they went the more exhilarating was the sport. The outdoor world began to learn of the wonderful "bob-sledding" at Davos-Platz. It became the fashion. No rapidly has the car was lifted from its trucks and



artists there to catch European fashionables at their play, and Davos-Platz is a center of excitement and mild winter revelry.

Up the Mountains With the Bob-Sleds

At the hotels and inns, and among the patients who are sojourning at Davos-Platz for lung troubles, arrangements for parties are usually made the evening before. The "parties" seldom embrace more than from four to eight, or enough for one or two sleds. There is seldom a time when the smooth, narrow trails leading up into the mountains are not alive with these enthusiasts. The fun begins at the bottom of a four-mile stretch, where the peasants of the country-side assemble every morning in force with their oddly-harnessed horses, and

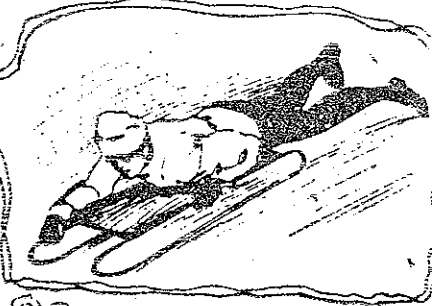
arms beseech them from every direction. The price for being drawn up the hill is so much per mile. In a trice the bobbed is hitched behind one of the sledges and there are half a dozen men and women on it. The shrill cries of the driver continue.

Another sled ties up to the cutter. One of its occupants, perhaps a pretty French girl, the others are an elderly lady and woman who may be her parents. Another bobbed ties on behind the second. Still another and another, until there are half a dozen trailing out behind. A party of patients from the sanitarium who are going up the mountain to spend a few hours watching the "start-outs" have filled the two seats of the cutter. There is a shout from the driver, who walks, and the two powerful horses start off at a half trot with their eager load.

TOWING A SLEIGHING PARTY UP

Sliding Down the Alps

SPORT NOW THE FASHION
TOURISTS IN SWITZERLAND.



TURNING A CORNER, BEFORE THE CHURCH LEAP.

The "church leap" is the term of the run, which, shooting off at the rate of 30 miles an hour, slides through the air for several yards without touching the ground.

The starting of a sled is made for caution. Each woman's skill is not so much in her ability to touch the trail with her sled or a broken leg or something which may result. The lead on the sled is carefully balanced. Sometimes the leader, the one who guides the sled, wears a mask. Sometimes this leader is a girl or a woman, especially if the American and English parties. The word is given. From behind the start or slowly pushes the bobbed to the edge of the decline.

"Off!" he shouts. There is a quick shove, a moment of apprehension on the part of the timid, and the rapid descent begun. Nothing on earth could stop the sled now, except an accident.

Eighty Miles an Hour.

Everything now depends upon the leader. He requires a delicate power of balance and nerves of iron. He must judge accurately each rise or fall in the trail ahead of him. A twitch of his foot at the wrong moment, an instant's pressure misplaced, and the whole party may be dashed into the snow banks, with many chances of injury.

Gradually the speed of the sled increases. The drifts begin to dash past with dizzying swiftness. Now down a grade, now over a crest, with the church leap always coming nearer.

The knots of people gathered along the way come and go like specks. Their shouts are lost almost as soon as they begin. Each man of the party is watched by the eyes of the leader. A sharper curve than usual. The others follow suit, and stretch out their arms to maintain the balance as they dash around the curve.

In a little over a minute the top of the crest above the church leap dazzles the eye. The bobbed is going at the rate of an express train. The speed grows greater every second. Eighty miles an hour! One-two—three seconds. There is a sudden ceasing of the scraping of the runners. Every heart seems to stand still. The sled is over the gallery of nations. It is here that a blunder on the part of the leader may result seriously. The sled is over the open space flies the sled and its human freight. The sled has left the crest of a hill and begun its run. Each runner is marked by a length of a mile. It rushes through space. When it strikes again the runners must be straight to the fraction of an inch. If they are not they are likely to be twisted off. Finally it strikes again, so gently that there is hardly a jar.

From there the trail stretches down for a mile and a half to the valley, where the sled stops, to be dragged to the top again for another furious ride.

Daring Feminine Racers.

Probably in very few places in the world do women display nerve like that shown at Davos-Platz. For the last two or three years national and international championship races have been run, and in all of them women have taken prominent parts. Two years ago Miss Robertson, a young American woman, won the ladies' championship from contestants who represented half a dozen nations. Racing for the Ashburn cup, she came out sixth against 25 male competitors.

Another American lady has invented a peculiarly graceful style of riding on "single sleds," here only one person rides, which has been adopted by nearly every feminine rider who pilots her own sled. She rides sideways instead of face downwards, and though the difficulty of steering is much greater this way, owing to the one foot being available, the style is so pretty and graceful that the average woman is willing to risk a little for the advantage it is to her personal appearance.

In February, however,...



RIGHING PARTY UP THE MOUNTAINS.
Three or four-rious points of vantage, where the ans. Others trail is especially steep or perilous. In others no...

watch occasional unfortunates hurled into snow banks and down the hill-sides than to participate themselves.

The major part of these are patients from the town, timid women and girls, staidly gentlemen and ladies, of many nationalities, and ranging from the millionaires down to the peasant. Most of them have constructed some sort of a seat, others have brought rags and robes which they have laid upon the snow. They laugh, sing and joke with vicious French tunes. There are French brass instruments, American girls, Englishmen smoking cutty pipes, trying to strike up acquaintance with German maidens.

As each bobbed goes up or down it is greeted with a chorus of shouts. It is cheered in half a dozen lan-

care-free gallery of nations, ready and willing to cheer or howl at anything.

"Off!"

The very beginning of the three-mile run is on the crest of a white, frozen snow slope. Down from it twists and winds a narrow track. Here it is steep, there sloping gently, as it follows the contour of the mountain. There are sharp corners down its whole length. Three miles away can be seen the narrow valley and the village. On each side of the trail are high banks of snow. Were these not here the loss of life in the perilous sport would be great.

At this "head" of the "long run," as it is called...